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Establishing a New Faculty Mentoring Program: Proposal Development

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Mentoring programs for new faculty provide clear benefits to the participant. However, the availability of mentoring is typically uneven across many campuses. This article describes how faculty development centers can successfully propose a New Faculty Mentoring Program that both benefits and saves money for the larger university. Preparation for a proposal includes a review of the current literature on campus mentoring, an examination of the needs of potential stakeholders, a review of data collected on retention/tenure for new faculty, an analysis of current campus resources, a pilot program and plans for assessment of the program.

Introduction

The current environment in academia presents increased challenges for new tenure-seeking faculty. While preparation for this role consists of focused development as a scholar, the new tenure-seeking faculty member must embrace the tripartite roles of scholar, teacher, and citizen of the academy. While this expectation is not new, the environment of the academy has changed, placing higher expectations on new faculty.

One major change in higher education is the expansion of pedagogical methods from information delivery via lecture format to learning fostered through the expanded use of technology and multiple modes of teach-

ing, such as active learning, online discussions, virtual classrooms, and service-learning (Marek, 2009; Spanier, 2010). Another variable affecting the teaching role of a new faculty member is the shift from the traditional full-time student entering the university directly from high school and devoting full-time effort to education. Today's students represent a multigenerational set of students, who may be first-generation students or second-degree students, and many are maintaining jobs and/or families (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2009; Hawkins & Sides, 1994).

Excessive stress levels also can negatively impact tenure success and faculty retention (Barnes, Agago, & Coombs, 1998; Blackburn & Bentley, 1993). This is of economic concern to the academy because investment in new faculty members is extensive: advertising, recruitment, orientation, start-up costs for research, support for dissemination, and other costs. When a new faculty member is not successful in obtaining tenure, there is a loss of money, time, and tenured faculty energies. Tenured faculty face many of the same stressors that tenure-seeking faculty do, and if mentorship is not valued, many senior faculty must make the choice to limit mentoring. Thus, mentorship must be valued and rewarded by the university. Consequently, academia faces a confluence of events that create an atmosphere where formal mentoring of new faculty is the perfect answer to multiple challenges.

The obvious and perhaps most pressing concern for academia at this time is the budget crisis. We will show that mentoring programs actually can improve the university's bottom line. A second looming challenge is the retirement of large numbers of faculty who began their careers in the 1960s and 1970s (Doyle, 2008). Universities are already gearing themselves to be more competitive in recruiting faculty (Farrell, 2008), and mentoring programs are an effective recruitment tool. Finally, many universities report that recruitment and retention of faculty, particularly from diverse backgrounds, is a high priority (Millman, 2007). Mentoring has been shown to be particularly beneficial to under-represented faculty (Boice, 1993; Brinson & Kottler, 1993; de Janasz & Sullivan, 2004).

Faculty development on many campuses is focused on teaching. However, when research is of equal or greater consideration in tenure decisions, the untenured faculty member will name research and publication as the larger stressor. On campuses where tenure decisions have a focus on research that is at least as strong as that on teaching, a mentoring program must address faculty development in both teaching and research.

A structured plan for Teaching and Learning Centers (TLCs) to use when creating and proposing a formal mentoring program to meet the needs of new faculty members is warranted. This article delineates and

expands on the following steps to create a carefully constructed proposal that is tailored to an institution's needs:

- A review of the literature on mentoring in higher education.
- Assessment of the needs of the institutional stakeholders.
- Analysis of institutional data on hiring and retention of new faculty.
- Assessment of the cost of hiring new faculty at the institution.
- Identification of campus resources.
- Establishment of a pilot program.
- Establishment of a well-defined purpose and structure for the program.
- A pre-planned assessment of the program.

Review the Current Literature

The literature on the effects of mentoring in higher education addresses the following areas: the needs of under-represented and international faculty (Garza, 1993; Nakanishi, 1993; Tillman, 2001; Wei, 2007), the efficacy of cross-gender and cross-racial mentoring (Brinson & Kottler, 1993), the effect of mentoring programs on recruitment and retention (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005; Detmar, 2004), the effects of mentoring on teaching (Boyle & Boyce, 1998), the effects of mentoring on research (Johnston & McCormack, 1997; Zahorski, 2002), benefits to the institution (Schrodt, Cawyer, & Sanders, 2003), and a description of the many types of mentoring programs in current use (Brent & Felder, 2000; Lottero-Perdue & Fifield, 2009; Sorcinelli, 1994). The goal of a literature review is to provide an institution-specific rationale for undertaking a mentoring program and to choose a model for a particular style of mentoring program that targets the needs of new faculty and the academy.

Evaluating the Stakeholders and Their Concerns

The rationale for a formal mentoring program is clear to those working

in faculty development. To gain the support of the institution, however, it is crucial to identify the potential stakeholders in the program and to determine their goals and needs. The proposal needs to be intentionally written for those who can support the program, whether monetarily or in other ways, such as through the recruitment of mentors. Stakeholders will include deans, provosts, financial officers, and chairs as well as the faculty members who will be involved in the program.

When determining the goals of the stakeholder(s), a good place to start is with the mission statement of the stakeholder's office. Another source of information is the strategic plan of the institution, which will indicate the direction of planned progress for the college or university. A third resource is the accreditation report for the institution, which is typically available on the university or college's website. Faculty development is likely to be part of the published principles of accreditation, which also are available online at the website of your accrediting body.

Using these resources to determine the planned direction of the institution, TLC staff can address how the needs and concerns of the identified stakeholders will be met through a faculty mentoring program. Among the potential goals of stakeholders or the institution are increasing the diversity of the faculty, increasing the international presence of faculty on campus, recruitment and retention of faculty, and faculty development for success in teaching and research. These goals are likely to be defined as outcomes of the institution. Additionally, an interdisciplinary approach to a formal mentoring program between two major stakeholders, such as co-sponsorship of the program between the TLC and the Office of Research, would enhance the effectiveness of the program for faculty as well as garner allied strength for the proposal.

Assessment of the Need for Mentoring on Campus

Three pivotal issues to demonstrate the need for a formal mentoring program on campus should be assessed. The first is the attrition and retention rates for new faculty over the last several years. If there is an office of institutional research, these data will be on record or retrievable from existing databases. The data retrieved can be organized over a number of years to include the number of new faculty hired, the number of those faculty who left the employ of the institution prior to tenure, and the number of each original cohort who achieved tenure. Analyzing these data by gender, race, or ethnic background may also provide illuminating information in developing a mentoring program.

A second issue with mentoring is costs. An analysis of the costs of hiring

new faculty at the institution will strengthen the proposal by showing how costly it is to replace faculty members who do not stay with the institution. Although the estimated costs of hiring a new professor are likely to vary by department, it would be helpful to include an example of costs at the low end. Detmar (2004) has this to say about the estimated costs of hiring a new professor:

My rough calculations suggest that when one factors in the cost of advertising a position; of the time spent by search-committee members, support staff, and college and university administrators in reviewing letters of application, curricula vitae, letters of recommendation, and writing samples; of sending the search committee to a national conference for initial screening; and of bringing finalists to the campus for interviews, the price of conducting a tenure-track search is about the same as the first-year salary of that new faculty member (at least in the humanities). (p. B8)

The third issue is the inequity of mentorship across academic units. An examination is likely to show that the availability of mentoring on campus is uneven, with some departments taking mentorship of new colleagues very seriously throughout the pre-tenure period, others providing some initial orientation, and still others having no formal program. Gathering this information may require an all-faculty survey or focus groups to create a picture of the mentoring environment on campus. While it may be assumed that new faculty members will solicit a mentor if needed, many new hires are reticent about requesting mentorship because this act may indicate a weakness on their part. Thus, interviewing or surveying current new faculty may elucidate issues not readily recognized.

Identifying Resources on Campus for Your Mentoring Program

It is very helpful to identify any resources at your university that could potentially be of value to new faculty members before beginning your mentoring program. Every campus will vary in terms of resources. Generally, however, most institutions of higher education will have some common resources that will be important and helpful to new faculty members: teaching resource centers, writing centers, grant writing workshops and/or trainings offices overseeing external grants, research consultants, and speaking centers. These resources can supplement the services provided by a new faculty mentoring program.

Identifying the resources that are both needed and available ahead of time will strengthen a proposal for the development of a mentoring program. For example, new Ph.D.s across disciplines often report that they received little or limited training on how to teach while completing their doctoral degree (Austin, 2002). As a result, teaching resource centers can be invaluable in terms of either making new faculty members aware of ongoing instructional trainings or providing a way for such instructors to request the development of specific types of training. In fact, directors of mentoring programs may be able to provide data for such new workshops based on mentees' responses to pre-program survey items. Every group of new faculty members will potentially have different areas of concern about their teaching role. Thus, these workshops should be dynamic and individualized to new faculty needs.

New faculty members may also find resource information, along with information about key contact people, to be important in regard to their teaching or research and external funding. For example, participants in a mentoring program will often benefit from any writing or editing assistance they can obtain through university writing centers or even current or retired senior faculty members. In addition, campus resources related to obtaining, managing, and continuing grant funding can be invaluable to new faculty members. Further, participants in a faculty mentoring program may even find research consultation services helpful in terms of evaluation designs, statistical analysis programs, or other issues related to one's research program.

Because many universities are seeing an increase in the number of new international faculty members, a speaking center or a speech and hearing clinic may also prove to be of great interest and assistance to these individuals. As an example, during the first two years of our program a new faculty member discovered that her students felt it was difficult to understand her spoken English. A speech and hearing clinic on campus offered accent reduction services in a group environment that was beneficial to her.

Diversity offices or centers on campus might also prove to be another valuable resource for a mentoring program. First, new faculty members may find that they have to deal with student advising or classroom concerns that are related to issues of diversity or inclusion. Second, minority or international new faculty members may want and need a connection with other faculty members that share their ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other issues of interest. Third, these new instructors may want to learn ways to utilize diversity in their classroom to enhance students' overall learning experience.

A Pilot Program

A year spent in a pilot program for your designed program is time well-spent. The advisory committee for our TLC sponsored our pilot program, which focused only on teaching. The pilot pointed out potential weaknesses that we were able to address prior to the development of the proposal, such as a need for mentoring in writing and research. This effort will minimize issues that would impede the first year of the program, especially when early success is crucial to ongoing funding.

A pilot program will also pinpoint budget items that may not have been evident, such as the need to train the mentors as well as others, including group facilitators if peer group meetings are part of the program design. A pilot program, however, is likely to have a shoestring budget. If a small grant program is available through the Teaching and Learning Center, as the case was on our campus, this funding can cover some expenses. When conducting our pilot program, we found that despite the campus adage, "If you feed them, they will come," campus catered refreshments were too much food for a small group and that small snacks, coffee, and tea are adequate. Therefore, the pilot provided information to prevent the waste of resources and supported the requested budget.

The evaluation of a pilot program can also provide additional support for a structured mentoring program. For example, our pilot program end-of-year assessments revealed that mentees who actively participated for the full year had less perceived stress compared to those who had difficulty making time for the program during the second semester. Our response to this was to create a year-long commitment statement that all participants sign at the beginning of the year. End-of-year feedback on the pilot program also made it apparent that research needed to be an equal part of the mentoring program at our university. As a result, we approached our office of research to sponsor the program jointly with us.

The pilot program also identified difficulties in monitoring the frequency of meetings between mentors and mentees without fostering feelings of intrusiveness. Because we were designing a program that had both individual mentee/mentor meetings and cohort group meetings facilitated by senior faculty members, our solution to this was to institute group meetings for the senior faculty participants as well. We instituted group meetings for the mentors, which were facilitated by the director of the program, and also for the group facilitators, facilitated by our trainer in group facilitation. In this way, mentors could report on a monthly basis how things were going with their mentees. We have also found that this allowed mentors to benefit from the collective wisdom in the room

on an issue. Discussions about various issues in academic life created a high level of synergy as we discussed ways to help new faculty members. We also learned that placing a new faculty member with a mentor and with group members outside the faculty member's department was perceived as very beneficial and a place to feel free to be open and receive honest feedback. As illustrated, the lessons we learned during the pilot year were of great value in planning the program that was proposed and subsequently funded by the university administration.

Assessment Planning

All good proposals include plans for assessment of the efficacy of the program. A formative evaluation might include short telephone calls with all participants to check in during the first semester. In the spring, a focus group with one or two open-ended questions will enable participants to reflect on the year's events and provide new ideas for the following year. In a focus group, comments made by one faculty member will generate discussion and elicit information that might not otherwise be collected from a questionnaire.

A summative evaluation in the form of a questionnaire, however, enables compilation of data to closely examine specific aspects of the program, determine what areas the mentees found most helpful, and provide some initial data for the first annual report. Subsequent years should include a short follow-up questionnaire sent to previous participants in the program to monitor successes and progress made towards tenure. These follow-up reports may also provide information on barriers or impediments in faculty members' progress toward tenure.

The Proposal Approval Process

The proposal approval process will no doubt vary across campuses. In our case, the Deans Council advising the Provost had convened some focus groups of new faculty and concluded that a mentoring program was of interest. When they discovered that the TLC Advisory Committee members were thinking along the same lines, they requested that the TLC Advisory Committee pursue the idea. The Council's desire was that the program be developed from the ground up rather than imposed from the administration down. Therefore, the final proposal was initially delivered to the Provost and the Deans Council. Representatives of the TLC Advisory Committee presented the proposal to the Deans Council with the Provost in attendance. The suggestion was made at that point that

the Deans would like to have some input as to who would be chosen to be mentors. This resulted in a process by which the department chair and the dean both would sign a letter indicating their approval for the faculty member to participate as a mentor or group facilitator and to recognize this work as part of his or her service work load. The final step was for a representative of the TLC Advisory Committee to meet with the Provost and the Chief Financial Officer to discuss budgetary plans.

Initial Outcomes and Implications for the TLC

A new faculty mentoring program places the TLC in the center of the strategic initiatives for the university. These included recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty, an international perspective, and a focus on inclusivity and inclusion. During the first two years of a university-wide formal mentoring program, we discovered that the program attracted new faculty members from under-represented populations. This has included faculty of color as well as international faculty. The program clearly is attracting new faculty who might feel they are in the minority on campus. We have done so while also addressing campus concerns for budget issues by demonstrating that our efforts are actually saving money for the university.

The second outcome for the TLC continues to be forging better relationships with other entities on campus whose mission it is to serve the faculty or to serve students through support for faculty. This is particularly crucial in the area of a teaching/research balance. On our campus, the mentoring program is the only connection between the office of research and the TLC. We were fortunate to have an administrator for the program with strong connections in both places.

The third outcome for the TLC is in the development of campus community with the TLC firmly in a central position. New faculty participating in the program reported that the strongest personal outcome in the success of the program for them was making connections across campus (see Table 1). They felt a greater sense of belonging to the campus community and that the administration of the university actually cared about them and their success. Discussions with faculty members from other disciplines, which included their mentors and their support groups, helped them to see the larger campus perspective on the issues they faced. It was important to them to have people to talk with outside their own departments. They felt that these conversations were more candid and open than those within their departments.

Finally, our experience with helping new faculty members find their

Table 1
 Percentage of New Faculty Who Indicated a Score
 of 4-6 (Out of 6) on the Impact of the Program

	Year One		Year Two	
	Mentor (N = 15 of 19)	Cohort Group (N = 15)	Mentor (N = 7 of 13)	Cohort Group (N = 7)
Connected with faculty across campus	80	100	71	86
Managed time for work and life	58	80	86	71
Adequately prepared for engaged teaching	60	53	100	86
Planned research schedule	87	73	100	86
Integrated teaching & research agendas	67	53	86	86

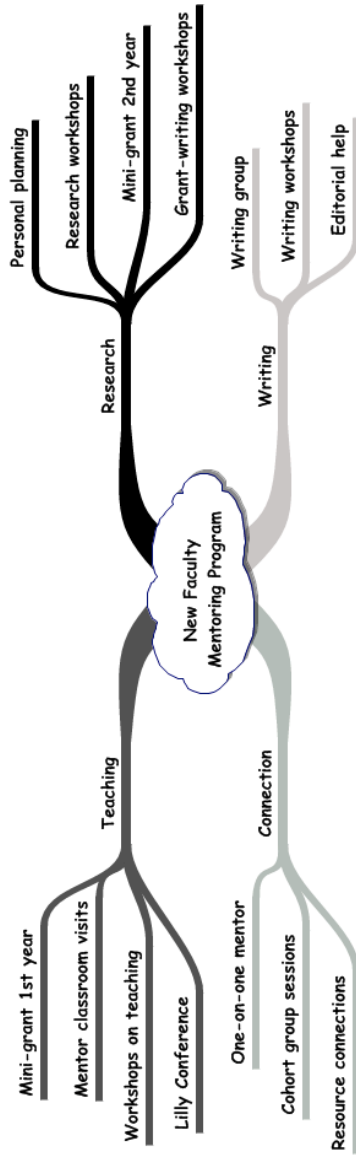
way in those first crucial years has led us to recognize that faculty development is much broader than just the development of teaching excellence. When the stressors related to tenure success revolve around research, faculty developers need to recognize this fact. Our goal must be to help new faculty balance the demands of teaching and research. Attaining this balance not only will improve their teaching and enhance student learning, but also will assist in their avoiding spending excessive time preparing for classes while letting their research go. In fact, our mentees reported that they found great value from discussions of management and prioritization of time for their teaching, research, and writing (see Table 1). Many of them talked about making three-year plans and goal-setting within each year of the plan. These activities allowed them to create a sense of purposeful control over their time and work and to modify their lives accordingly.

Our conclusion that faculty development for new faculty at our university had to expand beyond the focus on teaching to addressing the needs of the whole faculty member is in line with new initiatives at other universities. Centers for Faculty Excellence have been created at Emory University, Ithaca College, East Carolina University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Other institutions, such as the University of Texas at Austin, are creating faculty development programs around research to complement their programs for faculty development in teaching, but these are separate entities.

This proposal was developed to create a program that provided guidance and support to new faculty in meeting the increased challenges facing them in seeking tenure (see Figure 1). Through the proposal process our goal became the development of the faculty member as a whole person, with needs not only in teaching, but in research, service, and life balance. An unexpected outcome of our program was new faculty members' sense of being valued by the mentor, by the cohort group, by the director and by the university administration that supported the program. Adding guidance on life balance also sent a message to the new faculty members that we value not only what they produce, but who they are.

Developing a proposal for the formation of a new faculty mentoring program that clearly addresses the needs of the individual university and stakeholders is essential. This article provided important steps to consider when developing a formal mentoring program. Because Teaching and Learning Centers have been charged with faculty development in the role of teaching, these centers are in a pivotal position to design formal mentoring programs that help new faculty navigate the multiple demands placed on them. Accordingly, the TLC should lead the academy in this endeavor.

Figure 1
Format of the New Faculty Mentoring Program



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